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Diana T Fritz 03/15/2007 12:58:14 PM From DB/Inbox: Search Results

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Text:

UNCLASSIFIED

SIPDIS  
TELEGRAM

May 19, 2004

To: No Action Addressee  
Action: Unknown  
From: AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI (ABU DHABI 1608 - UNKNOWN)  
TAGS: OIIP, KMDR  
Captions: None  
Subject: SPECIAL MEDIA REACTION: THE SHADOW OF ABU GHRAIN ABUSES  
ON "AL-KHALLEJ" SEMINAR: "ARAB PRESS IN A CHANGING  
WORLD"  
Ref: None

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UNCLAS ABU DHABI 01608

SIPDIS  
CXABU:  
ACTION: PAO  
INFO: POL AMB DCM ECON  
Laser1:  
ACTION: PAO

DISSEMINATION: PAO  
CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: PAO:HOLSIN-WINDECKER  
DRAFTED: PAO:AHOSHAN  
CLEARED: NONE

VZCZCADI152  
OO RUEHC RUENAAA RUEKJCS RUEHZM RUEHLO RUEHFR  
RHRMDAB RUCJACC RUCQSOC  
DE RUEHAD #1608/01 1401349  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
O 191349Z MAY 04  
FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4409  
RUENAAA/SECNAV WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE  
RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0802  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0838  
RHRMDAB/COMUSNAVCENT  
RUCJACC/USCINCCENT MACDILL AFB FL//CCPA//  
RUCQSOC/USCINCSOC MACDILL AFB FL//PA//

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ABU DHABI 001608

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/ARP; NEA/PPD; NEA/RA; INR/R/MR; PA; INR/NESA;  
INR/B; IIP/G/NEA-SA  
WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE; NSC  
SECDEF FOR OASD/PA  
USCINCCENT FOR POLAD  
LONDON FOR GOLDRICH; PARIS FOR ZEYA  
LONDON - PLEASE PASS TO MOC

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [OIIP](#) [KMDR](#) [TC](#)  
SUBJECT: SPECIAL MEDIA REACTION: THE SHADOW OF ABU GHRAIN ABUSES ON  
"AL-KHALLEJ" SEMINAR: "ARAB PRESS IN A CHANGING WORLD"

11. SUMMARY: UAE'S LARGEST CIRCULATION, PAN-ARAB AND SHARJAH-BASED DAILY "AL-KHALEEJ" SPONSORED A TWO-DAY SEMINAR ENTITLED "ARAB PRESS IN A CHANGING WORLD". THE SEMINAR, WHICH WAS ATTENDED BY PROMINENT ARAB AND UAE MEDIA PERSONALITIES, AGREED THAT THE ARAB MEDIA IN GENERAL AND THE PRESS IN PARTICULAR IS FACING SERIOUS CHALLENGES, NAMELY THE ARAB LEADERS AND THE CENSORSHIP DEPARTMENTS IN EVERY ARAB COUNTRY. SPEAKERS ALSO AGREED THAT ALTHOUGH ARAB CONSTITUTIONS MAINTAIN "THE FREEDOM OF SPEECH", YET, THEY ALL HAVE A CLAUSE THAT "THE RULER HAS THE RIGHT TO CHANGE THIS IF THERE IS A NEED". INTERCULOTORS AND SPEAKERS ALSO NOTED THAT IN LIGHT OF WHAT HAPPENED IN ABU GHARIB, THE U.S. WILL NOT ELIGIBLE TO SPEARHEAD EFFORTS FOR REFORM AND HUMAN RIGHTS. END SUMMARY.

12. UAE'S LARGEST CIRCULATION PAN ARAB AND SHARJAH-BASED DAILY "AL-ITTIHAD" ORGANIZED A TWO-DAY SEMINAR ENTITLED "ARAB PRESS IN A CHANGING WORLD" MAY 11-12. THE SEMINAR, WHICH WAS ATTENDED BY PROMINENT ARAB MEDIA PERSONALITIES, SHED SOME LIGHT ON THE OBSTACLES THAT ARE COUNTERING ARAB PRESS. THE MINISTERS OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND INFORMATION, AND THE FORMER MINISTER OF INFORMATION ALSO ATTENDED. DURING THE Q&A SESSION, A CONSENSUS EMERGED THAT THE ABUSES IN ABU GHARIB REPRESENTED A SIGNIFICANT BLACK MARK ON THE U.S. THE IMAGES OF U.S. SOLDIERS HUMILIATING IRAQI PRISONERS NEGATE ANY LEADING ROLE OF THE U.S. IN AREAS SUCH AS HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY. A UAE FORMER AMBASSADOR, AND CURRENTLY AN ADVISOR AT THE EMIRI COURT IN DUBAI, TOLD THE INFORMATION SPECIALIST THAT "THE PICTURES ARE REALLY TRAGIC SIMPLY BECAUSE THEY KILLED IN THE MINDS OF ARAB INTELLECTUALS ANY HOPE FOR HUMAN RIGHT RESPECT. THE GOVERNMENTS HERE WILL EVENTUALLY USE THEM AGAINST THEIR OWN PEOPLE. THEY COME AS INDIRECT RESPONSES TO FREQUENT ARAB CALLS FOR MORE ROOM FOR DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS."

13. TALAL SALMAN, CHIEF EDITOR OF THE LEBANESE DAILY AL-SAFIR, DISCUSSED THE LEBANESE MEDIA ENVIRONMENT AND HOW THE CIVIL WAR AND FOREIGN INTERVENTIONS CAUSED THE DECLINE OF THE LEBANESE PRES. HE NOTED THAT THERE IS NO PRESS WITHOUT POLITICS BUT THE ARAB PRESS IS MOSTLY FOCUSED ON THE PUBLICITY OF THE RULERS AND NOT TO PROVIDE NEWS SERVICE TO THEIR READERS, WHICH EXPLAINS WHY SOME ARAB DAILIES BUY NEWS SERVICES ABOUT ARAB EVENTS PROVIDED BY FOREIGN NEWSPAPERS. POLITICS IN ARAB COUNTRIES ARE SECRETS THAT ARE KNOWN ONLY BY THE RULERS, AND MANY RICH NEWSPAPERS PROVIDE INTERVIEW WITH FOREIGN FIGURES, MOSTLY AMERICANS, MORE THAN THEIR OWN LEADERS. AS FOR THE FINANCING, GOVERNMENT NEWSPAPERS OFTEN DO NOT SUFFER ANY BUDGET RESTRAINTS, BUT THESE NEWSPAPERS DO NOT PRACTICE JOURNALISM WHICH EXPLAINS WHY THE PRESS OF THE FIFTIES WAS MORE INTERESTING THAN THOSE OF THE EIGHTIES AND THE NINETIES.

14. SALMAN CONCLUDED THAT "THERE IS NO DEMOCRACY WITH THE PRESENCE OF SECTARIANISM, RACISM, SALAFI RULE AND FOREIGN OCCUPATION, NOTING THAT LEBANESE JOURNALISM IS A DIRECT VICTIM OF THE ABSENCE OF DEMOCRACY IN THE ARAB WORLD. REGARDLESS OF ITS NEGATIVE AND POSITIVE ASPECTS, THE LEBANESE PRESS HAS PLAYED A LEADING ROLE AMONG THE ARABS DESPITE ALL OBSTACLES THAT OBSTRUCTED ITS EXPANSION AND DISTRIBUTION. ITS OVERALL OBJECTIVE WAS POSITIVE AND HAS CONTRIBUTED IN SPREADING AWARENESS, BOOSTED DEMOCRATIC CULTURE AND REITERATED ARAB CITIZEN'S RIGHTS IN HIS OWN ENVIRONMENT AND COMBATING FOREIGN OCCUPATION."

15. DURING ANOTHER SESSION, SALAHEDDIN HAFZE, SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE ARAB JOURNALISTS UNION AND EDITOR OF AL-AHRAM, DISCUSSED THE ISSUE OF FREEDOM IN THE ARAB PRESS. HE FELT THAT ARAB PUBLIC IS SHOCKED AT THE SLOWNESS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF REAL DEMOCRATIC REFORM. THE ARAB REGIMES CONTINUE TO SWIM AGAINST THE GENERAL CURRENT OF REFORM WITH ONLY FEW EXCEPTIONS THAT COME, MOST LIKELY, IN RESPONSE TO FOREIGN PRESSURE. THE CURRENT OPPOSING FREEDOM USED THE 9/11 EVENTS TO STRENGTHEN ITS IRON GRIP OVER THE FREEDOM OF THE PRESS UNDER THE PRETEXT OF PREVENTING TERRORISTS. THIS IS ALSO WHAT AMERICA DID FOLLOWING 9/11 TO MONITOR THE FLOW OF INFORMATION, PHONES, ELECTRONIC MAIL AND OTHER RESTRICTIONS THAT CONTRADICT WITH CIVIL FREEDOMS. THAT EVENTUALLY MADE A MOCKERY OF AMERICAN CALLS FOR REFORM. ANOTHER POINT HE MADE IS THAT THE ARAB PRESS MAKES A STEP FORWARD BUT IS FORCED TO MAKE FEW STEPS BACKWARD DUE TO DOMESTIC RESTRICTIONS.

¶6. JAMIL MATTAR, A SPEAKER AT THE CONFERENCE, NOTED THAT "AMERICA PUTS EXTREME PRESSURE ON THE ARAB COUNTRIES TO FACILITATE THE FREEDOM OF PRESS AND DEMOCRACY WHILE AT THE SAME TIME PRACTICES DEMOCRACY IN ITS WORST SHAPE, WHICH EVENTUALLY WORKS IN FAVOR OF THE ARAB GOVERNMENTS, NOT THE PEOPLE." HE ADDED THAT "GLOBALIZATION DOES NOT REPRESENT A CONSPIRACY AGAINST THE ARAB WORLD AS MANY TRY TO PROMOTE. IN FACT GLOBALIZATION IS A STAGE IN WORLD DEVELOPMENT THAT IS NOT DIFFERENT FROM PREVIOUS STAGES THAT FOLLOWED WORLD WAR I." HE ADDED THAT THE INFORMATION REVOLUTION AND MODERN COMMUNICATION ARE ONLY SAMPLE OUTCOMES OF THE GLOBALIZATION THAT WOULD ENRICH ARAB PRESS." OTHER PARTICIPANTS CALLED ON THE ARAB PRESS TO PLAY A HISTORICAL ROLE TO EMERGE IN THIS CLOUDY AND GLOOMY ENVIRONMENT. A UAE PROFESSOR NOTED THAT "FRANKLY THE ARAB PRESS IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE FAULTY SITUATION IN THE ARAB WORLD".

ALBRIGHT